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## **Ambitious Youth** Overcome Financial Obstacles to Succeed

Six years ago the YMCA Foundation established an Annual Educational Scholarship Fund Raising Drive to help support minority and disadvantaged young people participating in the YMCA Black and Hispanic Achievers Program, our alternative schools for expelled youth, and foster children under the Y's direct care. Since then, one hundred-twenty young adults, at a cost of \$300,000, have had the privilege of attending colleges, universities and technical schools. As one young scholar graduating this year said in a note to his sponsor, "I thank you for believing in the youth of Sarasota County and for being our support. I am glad to

live in a place where the most determined have a chance to succeed no matter what their situation."

Y Foundation Trustee Sonya Glassberg was the impetus behind our startup efforts providing seed money and challenging others to follow her example. March and April are exciting times for the kids as they reach for their dreams and explore the possibilities in staff-lead spring college bus tours. Like Glassberg, our Educational Scholarship donors are deeply committed to the value of higher education and to helping these economically disadvantaged kids. Last year the average annual household income of our students was \$37,268.

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*Cesar Gomez, left, YMCA Foundation Chairman Paul Bowman, Nikita Rubin, Chris Vela, Phil Delaney, Flori Roberts, YMCA Foundation Trustee and Luncheon Chairwoman, and Devona Downer at the YMCA Achievers Scholarship Luncheon.*

# Ambitious Youth Overcome Financial Obstacles to Succeed

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Fourteen of the 21 reported an annual household income below \$34,873, the federal poverty guideline for a family of four.



*Attending the YMCA luncheon to award scholarships to minority achievers were from left, Kashae Foster, Flori Roberts, YMCA Foundation Trustee and Luncheon Chairwoman, and Valeria Obi.*

“Helping these families cope with the staggering costs of a higher education has a high priority in the minds of our donors,” said Flori Roberts, YMCA Foundation Board Trustee and active volunteer in the program. “This is something we can all relate to.”

Introducing these ambitious young adults to their scholarship donors has become a signature of the program and has forged wonderful, lasting relationships. One young Black Achiever earned an internship at SunTrust Bank gaining the admiration of her co-workers with whom she still stays in touch.

Students and donors come together at two high-energy, fun events one at Christmas and at the Annual Achievers Scholarship Breakfast in

June where awards for returning and new students are announced. According to Roberts, the goal this year is to raise a minimum of \$100,000. A \$500 donation provides books for one semester, a \$2,000 donation will send a student to Manatee Community College for one year, and a donation of \$5,000-\$10,000 will send one of our Shining Star Scholars to a state university. “This is a program that rewards good young people for staying on track and following the rules, I would ask our donor sponsors to help us by making a contribution that will help empower our minority youth in their educational lives by emphasizing excellence in academics and community service.”

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